

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough consideration provided in the present application. Claims 1, 2, 5-6, 8-16 and 18-22 are currently pending in the instant application. Claims 1 and 15 have been amended and claims 7 and 17 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein. Claims 1 and 15 are independent. Reconsideration of the present application is earnestly solicited.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

As discussed in greater detail hereinafter, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) should be withdrawn. Accordingly, the finality of the Final Office Action mailed on July 2, 2004 should be withdrawn.

In accordance with the requirements of 37 CFR 1.116, Applicants respectfully request entry and consideration of the foregoing amendments as they remove issues for appeal (allowable claims rewritten in independent format).

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Claims 7 and 17 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Without conceding the propriety of the Examiner's rejections, but merely to expedite the prosecution of the present application, claim 1 and claim 15 have been rewritten to include the allowable features of claims 7 and 17, respectively. As indicated by the Examiner in the Office Action, all of the claims of the present application should be allowed and the present application should be passed to Issue.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8-16 and 18-22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodman et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,998,543). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In light of the foregoing amendments to the claims, Applicants submit that this rejection has been obviated and/or rendered moot. As indicated by the Examiner in the Office Action, claims 1 and 15 of the present application should be allowed. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the claim

rejections is respectfully requested. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the instant application is in a condition for allowance.

As to the dependent claims, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable due to their dependence upon an allowable independent claim, as well as for additional limitations provided by these claims.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but merely to show the state-of-the-art, no further comments are deemed necessary with respect thereto.

All the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed and/or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently pending rejections and that they be withdrawn.

It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Matthew T. Shanley, Registration No. 47,074 at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

Docket No. 0042-0484P

Appl. No.: 10/618,819

Art Unit: 1731

Amendment dated October 4, 2004

Reply to Office Action of July 2, 2004

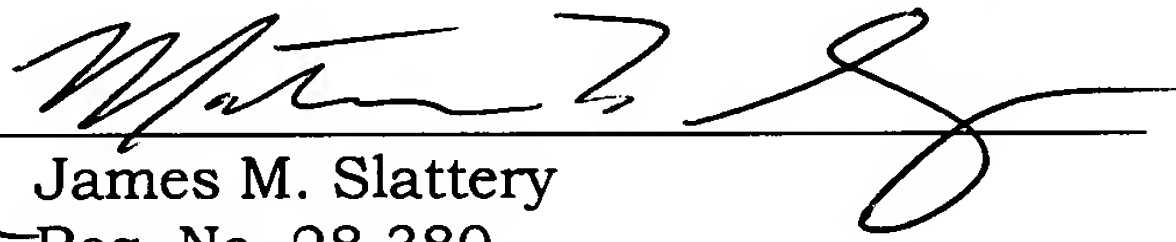
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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